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Stephen Kotkin, "The Soviet Rustbelt"



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Perestroika in the Soviet Rustbelt

by Stephen Kotkin

As the increasingly desperate Soviet leadership lurches towards a chimerical restoration of "order," the profound economic and social ills that were to have been remedied by *perestroika* loom larger than ever. With the evident demise of the five-year effort to reform the Communist system, perhaps it makes sense to try to assess the current state of affairs in Soviet society.¹

Rather than Moscow, Leningrad, or the national republics, the focus here is Magnitogorsk, a medium-sized industrial city in the heartland of Russia where the author spent several months doing field work in 1987 and 1989. A planned "garden city" built under Stalin and championed by him as a showcase of socialism, Magnitogorsk was at one time synonymous with Soviet industrialization and the "building of socialism." Today, the city is a prime expression of the realities that called forth the current reform and that, notwithstanding a profusion of enormous changes, stubbornly persist.

a political economy

Forty-three kilometers around, the Magnitogorsk Works, a dense mass of smokestacks, pipes, cranes,

and railroad track that dominates city life in every way, consists of 130 shops, many of which are as large as whole factories. "Steel plant" would be an inadequate description of the complex formed by an ore-crushing and ore-enriching plant, a coke and chemical by-products plant, 10 gigantic blast furnaces, 34 open-hearth ovens, and dozens of rolling and finishing mills. The Magnitogorsk Works produces as much steel each year — 16 million tons — as Canada or Czechoslovakia do, and almost as much as Great Britain does. This industrial colossus is just one such enterprise, albeit one of the largest, in an economy comprised of thousands of large factories located in hundreds of similar towns that have arisen in the Soviet period.

The Magnitogorsk Works was built at the site of one of the country's richest and most accessible iron-ore deposits, which by virtue of its location in the Urals region lay beyond the reach of an invading army. By 1938, less than a decade after construction began, the core of the Works was in place. Further work was halted until the war necessitated abrupt expansion. Additions to the plant continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s, when by replicating itself on the basis of its 1930s design, the plant doubled in size to reach its current proportions. But

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by the early 1970s the great mountain of iron ore was exhausted; "they ate it," as the locals say. The steel plant must now import iron ore from other regions. (It has always had to import its energy source, coking coal.) Moreover, in the age of long-range bombers and space technology, Magnitogorsk is no longer invulnerable, and it remains far from most of the markets where its products are consumed. To top it all off, there are serious problems with the plant's operation.

To be sure, Magnitogorsk supplies steel to many of the leading branches of industry in the USSR, including the military. Yet although the factory seems to have no trouble maintaining or even increasing the quantity of steel it produces, recently, according to experts within the factory, it has had trouble meeting the quality standards of its customers, and even greater problems are anticipated. Ivan Romazan, the director of the Magnitogorsk Works, noted in an interview with the national Komsomol newspaper in 1989 that "more than one-half of all fundamental equipment has been in use for over 30 years." Two years earlier, Yuri Levin, deputy director for economic affairs, had been more blunt. "The factory," Levin told a correspondent for *Pravda*, "has the largest assemblage of obsolete equipment in the country." A similar litany of despair can be heard from officials at other Soviet factories.

Given the exhaustion of local raw materials, the Magnitogorsk factory's isolated geographic position and the obsolescence of the plant's technology, one may wonder why the plant has not been abandoned in favor of a new one in a different location. Yet the factory remains tied to its location by the substantial housing stock it has built up. Such commodities do not come cheaply in the Soviet Union. Moreover, a government predicated on notions of social justice could not very well throw the more than sixty-thousand people at the plant — not to mention those employed in town — out of work. And Magnitogorsk is more than just a huge steel plant. It is one of the very powerful symbols of the October Revolution itself; of the rise of backward peasant Russia to the status of an industrial and military superpower. Dismantling Magnitogorsk would be costly in Soviet terms and, in effect, tantamount to repudiating one of the bases of the

regime's legitimacy and the achievements of the revolution.

And so, the decision has been taken to modernize the Magnitogorsk Works. After decades of delay, replacement of obsolete equipment has finally begun, but it proceeds slowly and may, because of the drawn-out nature of the process and the sheer size of the technological stock, condemn the plant to permanent obsolescence. Meanwhile, more and more steel is being produced in Magnitogorsk, even as the product satisfies fewer and fewer of the plant's customers, which have no choice but to accept shipments, driven as they are to produce more and more machines.

No one knows how much of Magnitogorsk's yearly output of 16 million tons of steel represents its own defective output sent back a second time through the steelmaking process. What is clear is that much steel whose quality falls considerably below even the modest parameters set by planners is being shipped, becoming defective inputs in the machine-building industry, which in turn manufacture defective machines — designed to make more steel. Yet what looks like "production for production's sake" might as well be termed "production for employment's sake." To produce 16 million tons of steel, the Magnitogorsk Works employed more than sixty thousand workers. By comparison, the USX plant in Gary, Indiana, the most modern large integrated American mill, produced eight million tons with 7,000 workers.

Not all of the enormous difference in work force size should be attributed to lower productivity, however. Part of the reason for the bloated work force at the Magnitogorsk Works derives from the fact that deficiencies in the central allocation system compel the plant to devote substantial internal resources to the manufacture of machines, tools, and spare parts indispensable to the plant's operation. Similarly, a huge supply of workers has to be kept to cope with the strains on outmoded and overtaxed equipment. Moreover, the rhythms of industrial activity are such that an enterprise had to retain a padded work force year round to be able to "storm" at the end of production periods to meet draconian plan targets — the contingency upon which everyone's fate at a plant hangs. (For similar reasons, mounds and mounds of Magnitogorsk

steel continue to accumulate at "stockpiles" around the country, rusting under the open sky.)

Meanwhile, despite Magnitogorsk's huge industrial base, with its pool of skilled labor and abundance of raw materials, Soviet laws and economic priorities have conspired to restrict the development of a consumer and service economy. This state of affairs has given rise to a major shadow economy of tacitly condoned illegal activities without which the official economy could not function. While the official supply network shows itself incapable of effective expansion, the shadow economy demonstrates an enviable capacity to fill in the growing gaps. No one seems more adept at dealmaking in the shadows than the supply managers of state enterprises and the chief of the city's trade network, but they are among the first to ridicule the manifest illogic of an economic system that simultaneously forbids and compels people to engage in market activities.

Although the need for some kind of radical change grows ever more urgent, through 1990 effective economic reform remained elusive. Despite a series of heralded measures that have brought some minor adjustments, the steel plant continues to be held in the vise of the Ministry of Ferrous Metallurgy. Raw materials are being centrally allocated, prices for the factory's wares are set by central planners, and customers for finished products are designated from above. As factory officials are hectored by central authorities to improve quality, they are also pressured for even more output, which results in more and more lower quality steel. Moreover, under the pressure of the various reform measures thus far implemented, the change that has occurred has been in the direction of chaos and breakdown. Worst of all, the huge administrative bureaucracy targeted for reduction has maneuvered to benefit from the flux, using it as a pretext to further tighten its grip on the economy.

In Magnitogorsk the attempt at radical reform of the state economic sector has brought to light what the reformers originally did not envision: the discovery that the problem lay not solely in antiquated technology or excessive centralization, but in the nature of the command economic system itself. Nevertheless, the task of not merely adjusting the economic mechanism but of superseding it confronts reformers with a vastly more daunting chal-

lenge, one of a political nature which they hesitate to take up even though the ossified prevailing system has been irreversibly unhinged by their efforts to fix it.

Thus, despite all the talk about marketization and privatization, neither is being tried at the steel plant. For Magnitogorsk, the indecision is both blessing and curse. Not only would marketization and privatization fail to solve all of the problems of the Magnitogorsk Works; such measures could very well lead to the plant's demise. In the meantime, at the Magnitogorsk plant working conditions remain infernal, steel quality continues to decline, and the new technology belatedly being introduced — but a fraction of what is needed — functions within an economic system that rewards inefficiency as it keeps tens of thousands employed.

While a fundamental transformation of the traditional state sector of the economy still looms on the horizon — such a change would be a mixed blessing for Magnitogorsk — efforts to promote a complementary cooperative (or private) sector have yielded halting results, in part because the dominant state sector remains largely unchanged.

Given the endemic shortages, procuring ordinary raw materials to run a business can be done only through the state allocation system. Most cooperatives discover that their existence is utterly dependent on the goodwill of state enterprises. Indeed, cooperatives have sprung up not in the much-needed sphere of food and services, but within the interstices of industrial firms eager for any help they can get to meet plan targets, and just as eager to pocket some of the profits.

Magnitogorsk's handful of independent private entrepreneurs have encountered a bewildering, ever-changing, and arbitrarily applied set of regulations enforced by local officials keen to exercise their authority over the fledgling businesses but less enthusiastic about promoting their success. Railing against the chokehold applied to their city by central ministries, city authorities turn around and choke the fledgling cooperative businesses under their supervision.

Nor does the hostility of the local population toward cooperatives, a hostility based on a mixture of blind resentment and a tendency toward levelling, show any signs of abating, despite Herculean

efforts by the city newspaper. Frustrated and feeling utterly powerless in the midst of chronic shortages, low-quality goods, and the higher prices charged by the coops, a small group of consumers under the newspaper's sponsorship formed a "union" to defend their interests. But organizing a boycott in a situation of state monopoly was obviously self-defeating, while no amount of additional inspections could raise the quality of goods produced by firms supplied with defective inputs and unchallenged by competition.

Bucking the odds, members of Magnitogorsk's functioning cooperatives have pressed on, surmounting the difficulties inherent in starting any business while managing with the additional burden of an unpredictable and unfriendly business environment. Entrepreneurial skills and a capacity for hard work, both erroneously thought to have been forever eradicated by the communist economic system, have been reasserted. More than that, cooperative members speak with one voice about the dignity and sense of freedom that more than made up for the hassle, humiliation, and hard work. Even though cooperatives are few, dependent, and most of them remain small, there appears little doubt that were a freer hand extended to private business, an additional form of social stratification, very different from the present system of privileged access based on connections and influence, would arise — with far-reaching political consequences. But so far, the movement in that direction has been severely restricted and, moreover, it could be reversed at any time. The state-run supply system, inefficient as it is in serving elementary needs, remains the dominant one in Magnitogorsk, and is a source of immense power in the hands of those who control it.

no longer a matter of honor, glory, and heroism

Even after the summer 1989 outbreak of strikes among miners in the Ukraine and Siberia, no independent workers' organizations formed in Magnitogorsk; no strikes have occurred at the gigantic steelworks. Many workers, beneficiaries of a number of privileges, retain a strong stake in the system. At the same time, management, in combination

with trade unions and party cells, exercises complete control over the distribution of everything from shoes and coats to apartments and furniture. In such circumstances, where everyone has something to lose, workers are understandably cautious.

Demoralization and apathy seem to have overtaken even those workers who do express an interest in a radical reordering of power. Of four workers I interviewed at great length in the security of their homes, one, a skilled worker, middle-aged, from one of the city's largest factories, had the most to say about the causes of his inaction.

"How much evil has accumulated! It hurts to think about it. What's changed? We're more dependent than ever on the shop bosses and functionaries. Everything is scarce, so you get things only by distribution . . . if you're down on the list. When your turn comes, *they* let you know.

"If you work hard, they demand from you. You get lots of attention. They make a son of a bitch out of you. You have to get up in front of everyone and make speeches; they give you medals with pompous names. So it's best to stay quiet, not attract attention to yourself. Once in a while, you work like a bull; the remainder of the time, you rest.

"These worker-heroes — it's a lie, a fiction. There's nothing natural about them, 100 percent artificial. They find such people early on, the ones who 'pull the one blanket toward themselves.' They get apartments earlier, various privileges. Then we read all about how in the West, the bourgeoisie control the workers by creating a worker aristocracy!

"I studied Marxism-Leninism. You could read the book right side up or upside down. Whichever way suited you best at that moment. If you needed to justify something, no problem: the theory was at your service. Party-mindedness, they call it: the cleverest manipulation technique ever invented.

"Now we have democracy. We 'elect' our shop boss. Some bloodsucker comes into the shop and makes an oily speech: 'The fellows talked me into running for shop boss,' he begins. We look at each other. Who the hell would try to talk *him* into being *our* boss! Demagoguery has increased beyond belief.

"No one makes a move until we see where the power lies. As soon as it is clear, we all quickly take that side. We're completely dependent on them.

Food, clothes, apartments, furniture, daycare, summer camp, vacations — everything is allocated by them according to their lists with which they rule over our lives. Everyone has something to lose. It might seem you have nothing, but they take something away, and you have even less.

"This apartment, I waited eighteen years for it. During that time we lived four in one room. No one remembered what color the walls were. You couldn't see them, they were so covered with our belongings stacked up to the ceiling. I worked and struggled and endured all manner of humiliation for eighteen years for this pathetic, unexceptional new apartment. It makes me sad and angry to think about it. How much evil has accumulated! I have so much on my soul."

On the balcony, we looked across the man-made lake to the steel plant, whose mammoth structures ran as far as the eye could see in both directions along the opposite shore, stationary clouds of smoke perched above the forest of smokestacks. Even at this distance the sheer size of the metallurgical monster was overwhelming.

"We built it all right. We worked, we toiled, we built. And now they can't figure out what the hell we built! No one knows what to call it: barracks socialism, Stalinism, totalitarianism. You could spend the rest of your life thinking about it, but you'll never come up with the right name. What we built — it's unnameable."

A co-worker guest approached us on the balcony. "I heard that there are eighteen million bureaucrats in Moscow. Can you believe it! That's Russia! We have to get rid of them all. But you try and you can't do it. You can't get loose from them. And here, in this place, we can't get rid of ours either." He returned to the living room, where hospitality was available.

"He's an idiot. Don't pay any attention to him, a fool. But that's not the main thing. The main thing is that he has integrity. He'll never betray me. There are so many stoolies everywhere, especially at work. These days we talk much more, and you wonder if there are even enough stoolies to go around. Alas, there are.

"Many years ago I worked without sparing myself. My boys did the work of four brigades. Then they made someone else a boss. We did the

best work; the other guy got the prize. A blabbermouth, he made speeches, applied for admission to the party. It makes you want to pull down the whole system with your bare hands.

"While growing up I understood nothing. Only later did I reflect on how fear is instilled in us. It was passed on to me from my parents, who repeatedly told me not to say certain things, that it would be bad for them if I did. I didn't understand why, but I loved them, so I obeyed. Then I find myself saying the same thing to my kids. We were born decades after the so-called terror, yet we're afraid. We're dependent.

"I read every day about our city's pollution problems, and the devastation of our health. Earlier they were silent about this. Then I go to work and get a double bonus for violating our ecological norms, which are none too strict to begin with. The end of the month, and especially the end of the quarter, we crank so much to meet the plan that we make a mockery of the pathetic cleansing devices that have been installed.

"They force you to violate the technical norms for the machinery in order to increase quantities, exceed the plan targets for bonuses. The boss personally issues the order. But the machine invariably breaks down, or repairs are needed earlier than expected. You did it. If they want, they nail you for negligence, or worse. You speak up at a meeting or in the shop — they lower the boom. We know it's impossible to go on this way. The nerves can't take much more. I smoke like a furnace. My blood pressure is bad. My friends are dying of cancer — maybe I'll get it too.

"Perestroika, you say? I have a family, children, grandchildren. They want to go away for the summer. What can you say to them? Daddy told the boss he didn't like the way he was being treated, so this year and for the next couple of years no one is going anywhere.

"Now they 'post' the scarcity lists so you can see where you stand on the line, say, for housing. But soon you find that the people moving into the new apartments across the way weren't even on the list. Those on the list continue to wait. Only a handful of names are removed in a year. We see: the lists are a show; they look nice on the wall when it comes

time for the bosses to account for themselves to the even bigger bosses.

"You can't buy anything nowadays without coupons. You have the money, but without the coupons they don't sell anything to you. The more we hear the word *perestroika*, the more goods are no longer for 'open' sale but can be bought only with coupons, the more power they have over us.

"Coupons are distributed by the trade union, by the Komsomol, by the party. They announce in the shop that soon there will be so many coupons for such and such goods. Who gives them out and when, to whom, what becomes of them — it's all a mystery. Only when my wife learns whose wife is selling cosmetics at black market prices do we discover who got the coupons.

"At first there was some hope. We felt we could breathe at last. It was a release. Now I don't know. I'm tired, even though I'm not old. And anyway, how can you live only on faith? We're boxed in." He lowered his head, took a deep breath, and sighed.

Like many of his fellow workers, this man did not see the solution to the manifold problems in the market system with private ownership, fluctuating (that is, rising) prices and "socially beneficial" unemployment, even though as a result of *perestroika* he came to doubt the viability of the protective command economy and to scorn appeals to socialism. All the same, if *perestroika* means anything to workers, it means dignity and a chance to decide their own fate. And because of the muscle workers could potentially muster if organized, the prospect of a protracted transition to "capitalism" could well pose as big a political challenge to an industrialized Soviet Union as the building of socialism did to an agrarian one.

without a "civil society"

On 28 July 1988 the Magnitogorsk newspaper published what it called "answers by the chief of the city KGB, Viktor Grigorevich Lavrishchev, to questions from the editor." Many people viewed the publication as further evidence of the inexorable march of *glasnost*, whose progress to that point had been remarkable to behold. But others found it a shocking publication, not least because the mysterious organization came out into the open for the first

time yet did so without either apology or explanation, simply identifying itself (and its head) as if it were any normal government institution.

Lavrishchev asserted that he was responding to letters received by the newspaper on the "leaflet" distributed in the city and signed GIMN (a curious designation he did not bother to explain). "The city KGB branch is also getting such letters requesting us to take action," he revealed, without specifying the content of the leaflets. "L. G. Cheshev, a driver, sent in a leaflet with a note appended to the back: 'Respected comrades of the KGB! In July those leaflets appeared in mailboxes. I heard that such trash is being posted around the city. Can it be that you are not able to apprehend the "authors"? This is real propaganda against Soviet power and the state. It is impermissible.'" Here in a "request" from the "people" was the KGB's mandate.

"The numerous letters of citizens prompted the city KGB, together with the procuracy, to evaluate the facts as described in the letters," Lavrishchev continued. "We came to the conclusion that the activity of the group GIMN falls under the jurisdiction of the KGB." By way of explanation, he asserted that the content of the leaflet (still unspecified) "touches on the political basis of our state" and that GIMN "acted in a secret underground manner."

Lavrishchev's "responses" to the editor's questions were followed by two long quotations from the rector of the Teachers College and the Mining Institute, the two institutions of higher learning in the city. Each scholar set out to demonstrate why the theories put forth by GIMN were not true Marxism-Leninism, which these theories evidently claimed to be. (Only here did readers get any sense of the content of the leaflets.) Their exegeses resembled the familiar heresy-hunting of Stalinist and Brezhnevite vintage, complete with appropriate citations from Lenin's *Collected Works*. In refuting the arguments of GIMN without presenting them, Lavrishchev himself could not claim to be an expert on Marxism-Leninism. But with the cooperation of the city's two "highest authorities" on scientific truth he did not have to.

In conclusion, Lavrishchev lauded the driver Cheshev and all those who performed their civic duty by informing the KGB whenever they came across something suspicious. Yet despite the

seriousness of its transgressions, GIMN was merely admonished. To a question about how the newspaper's readership was demanding "severe punishment" for the conspirators, Lavrishchev replied with magnanimity. "Of course, in the present conditions of democracy and *glasnost* the opinion of the people is decisive," he allowed. "But we can take into account that during our discussion with the members of GIMN it became clear that they are not irreversibly lost people. It must be said that from the first days of their birth the organs, following the traditions laid down by Felix Dzierzynski, have been concerned not to punish people but to help them get on the right track."

By highlighting this "lenient" treatment of the supposedly dangerous GIMN, Lavrishchev sought to make maximum political capital for the KGB out of the appearance of the city's first "dissidents." The advent of a group consisting of no more than half a dozen devoted "Marxists," by an irony of history, provided convenient justification for the continued existence of the repressive organs even in the new era of *perestroika*. Yet in the end Lavrishchev's attempt to fashion a new public image for the KGB as an agency devoted to and working within the law yielded a bizarre amalgam of Stalinism and *glasnost*.

Members of GIMN offered a different version of the leafletting and of their encounter with the KGB. Vladimir Zerkov, one of the two leaders of GIMN, agreed to meet with me at his home. When I arrived, he took me underneath the building to a dirt-floor cellar, where he had set up a small workshop. "There are no bugs here," he commented as we sat on concrete blocks.

"I left the army in 1978 and joined the Magnitogorsk police," he began, intensity in his eyes. "In 1985 I was fired. They were knee-deep in corruption, and I wouldn't look the other way. They were afraid I was going to blow the whistle."

"In May 1988 GIMN, which stands for Group for the Study of the Marxist Heritage, was formed by the union of two groups: the original GIMN, which I began in January 1988 and another group, without a name, begun in the fall of 1987 by Borodin, my cousin. We shared a serious commitment to the classics [of Marxism]."

"Toward the end of June 1988, we distributed several leaflets exposing the present system for

what it is. The first and second one in 400 copies; the third, 800. We chose the residential districts with the highest concentration of workers and slipped them into mailboxes under the cover of darkness."

"On 9 July people were called in for a 'conversation' [with the KGB]. Some people wrote up 'explanations' [i.e., confessions], which they then signed. How were the organs able to discover who we were so fast? This was when it became clear that Borodin was a secret KGB informer, something I should have suspected."

"Lavrishchev's article in the newspaper appeared that same month. At work they fired me the next day. I wrote a response to Lavrishchev's slander but received no answer from him. But I did meet with Kucher, the editor of the newspaper. He lectured me on party-mindedness and the fact that the newspaper was the organ of the city party committee. It was clear he was not interested in fundamental change either."

"For the rest of the summer we did nothing, out of fear. At the end of August we were given a warning by the chief procurator that our activities were anti-Soviet and unconstitutional. 'We should consider ourselves warned,' he repeated sternly. In July, August, and September 1988 I was under constant surveillance, twenty-four hours a day. I was accompanied wherever I went, my phone was tapped, my neighbors were 'recruited' to assist. I know they didn't plant a bug directly in the apartment because it takes time to install the devices (I've seen them) and neither my wife nor I were ever away from the apartment for more than two hours. So they enlisted the upstairs neighbor to listen in and watch us."

"In October within our group we had an argument about whether to issue another leaflet. This forced a split back into the original groups. The group originally without a name continued to call itself GIMN. We — the forerunner GIMN — decided to adopt the name Workers' Group. Then the members of the splinter Workers Group accused me of being an employee of the KGB, so I'm on my own now. I don't need them anyway. The real constituency for a new movement is the working class."

"*Perestroika* is not a revolution; it is the ideology of the bureaucracy. Our system is not socialist; it is not based on Marxism. If you go back and read Marx,

you'll see that he intended nothing like what we have.

"They're preparing another 1937. You can see by the decrees that are being issued to ready the repressive machinery. There'll be an edict soon, ending *glasnost*. *Perestroika* is a double game. Meanwhile workers are ready for a real revolution. Our task is to get in touch with other true Marxists. There are many around the country. Because of the state's repressive apparatus we are forced into a conspiratorial mode, which is how we work best anyway.

"How big was the Bolshevik conspiracy when they began? And look how they overturned all Russia before the revolution was stolen by the bureaucrats. Only a new workers movement, an iron dictatorship of the proletariat, can save the situation. It will not be possible to avoid bloodshed."

GIMN's other leader is Vadim Borodin. A twenty-nine-year-old schoolteacher, Borodin claimed during an interview in his apartment to have spent his entire life studying Marxism. "In Marxism I see above all a formidable methodology," he explained. "The group GIMN was formed precisely to study that method seriously." Whereas his counterpart Zerkina saw in Marxism a tool for making another revolution, Borodin took pleasure in the analysis. The conversation soon turned to his relations with Zerkina.

"I know what he says about me, that I'm a KGB informant," Borodin acknowledged. "People say the same about him. He thinks he knows everything about how the KGB works; he thinks they follow his every move. Zerkina is a classic paranoiac. As for his accusations, I can only tell you what happened that July.

"While I was away for a few days in Moscow and my parents were at work, my wife was visited by the KGB. They asked if she objected to their looking around a bit. Stunned, she reflexively answered that she did not [object]. They made a thorough search, took a number of documents, all of which they later returned (no doubt having copied them).

"Over the phone I spoke with the city procurator, who advised me to make a formal complaint. I considered this useless, since my wife had not asked them their names, and anyway she had agreed to let

them 'look around.' Had she said no, their action would have been illegal. You see we have laws, but they are flexible.

"As soon as I returned from Moscow, the KGB called for me, as I expected. They picked me up, drove me to their offices, and we had a friendly conversation. After that, they came around to talk with me a few more times. That August the procurator hinted that we might get into trouble if we continued our actions."

In a demonstration of the new openness, a representative of the procuracy agreed to answer my questions regarding GIMN. "GIMN was called in and warned," said Konstantin Anikin, chief procurator of one of the city's three administrative districts. "One article in their charter calls for the overthrow of society by means of violence. This is a violation of the constitution. We told them to work to change the law if they were not satisfied, but in the meantime to comply with it. They did not make a formal complaint with the procuracy about any illegal search. This is the first I've heard of it. . . .

"We have relations with the local department of the KGB. There are instances of cooperation in crimes involving state security. Pretty much, however, they go about their business. To be honest, I am not familiar with all of the cases they are working on." Besides GIMN, Magnitogorsk has a second "informal" whose formation and subsequent development are also instructive.

In March 1988 the newspaper disclosed the formation of a "group" calling itself Counter Movement and led by V. Timofeev, a construction worker, and V. Sidorov, a music teacher. The group's reasons for forming were not given, but the newspaper slammed it for lacking a concrete program. "How easy it is to criticize, to point fingers," the editorial scolded the group, admonishing its members: "Don't hurry to make noise." Only when the paper accused the group of appealing to emotions with such slogans as, "Get rid of all open hearth ovens at once," did it emerge what Counter Movement might be about.

Similarly, the newspaper faulted the group for failing to obtain official sanction for a public demonstration held the previous November — the first (albeit indirect) disclosure of a very newsworthy event. The paper added in passing that since

that time no group had been granted permission for a demonstration, as no “deserving requests” had been submitted.

A meeting between representatives of Counter Movement and city authorities was finally arranged. Upon arrival, those attending discovered that the appointed place was suddenly closed for “emergency renovations.” Far from singling out such behavior for censure, the paper excused it as reflecting a “lack of experience living in conditions of democracy.” In any case, the meeting was rescheduled and took place on the “renovated” premises.

At the meeting, a teacher at the Mining Institute made a point of mentioning how closely Counter Movement’s “program” — which he gave as “solve all the social problems of the city, develop the city’s culture, pay more attention to the city’s ecology, and reestablish the city’s history” — resembled the existing party program. “Why then,” wondered the teacher, “is this organization necessary?” In other words, thanks but no thanks; the party neither needs nor wants helpers.

But soon the authorities reversed themselves, giving Counter Movement — colloquially known as an “informal” (*neformal*, from the English word) — the formal status of an “amateur [*liubitelskaia*] organization attached to the Leninist Komsomol palace of culture,” a recreational facility owned and managed by the steel plant for its employees. That the group needed official recognition, attachment to a state institution, and a reason to exist other than its members’ own desire to do so seemed to be taken for granted.

Similarly, subsequent treatments of Counter Movement by the newspaper, although still hostile, were also less clumsy. “What kind of *neformality* could form in Magnitogorsk?” asked Vladimir Mozgovoi in a long and carefully crafted article later that summer. “There are no old buildings; therefore there is no problem with preserving our architectural heritage and national culture. That leaves ecology.” Mozgovoi implied that preservation of national culture and ecology were both vehicles for launching oneself into politics from outside the party apparat. Unfortunately, he neglected to discuss the strong reaction of the apparat, clearly taken aback by the new phenomenon thrusting itself into

their previously monopolized domain. Instead, he focused on the group’s formation.

According to Mozgovoi, “Counter Movement was first formed in the fall of 1987 as a ‘group of general social direction.’ Only later did they discover the ecology theme.” He suggested but did not state that there might be an element of opportunism involved. Mozgovoi pointed out that Counter Movement called itself a “patriotic organization,” but was careful not to associate openly with a “discredited movement.” No specific movements were mentioned, but the Moscow-based Russian chauvinist and avowedly anti-Semitic Pamyat (Memory) came easily to a Magnitogorsk reader’s mind. In keeping with the article’s style, however, Mozgovoi left open the question of why Counter Movement, the first sanctioned “unofficial” political organization in Magnitogorsk, might desire such affiliation.

Counter Movement meets every Sunday morning at the palace of culture. On 16 April 1989, there were nineteen people in attendance, more than half of them women and all but three older than forty. Well past the announced starting time, it seemed no meeting would take place. One woman asked, “Who will lead us?” There was no response. Then a man got up, went to the front of the room, announced his name as Gai, and stated that he would give a report on the legal subgroup’s activities, which consisted of a campaign against the Magnitogorsk newspaper.

“They don’t publish our letters or answer our complaints,” Gai asserted. “They’re not interested in addressing serious questions. Yet there’s nowhere else to go: the trade unions, the party, the Procuracy, they’re all connected. All they care about is getting hold of oranges and fashionable clothing so they can live well and speculate.” When Gai asked the small group if anyone had written a letter to the newspaper that had gone unanswered, several hands shot into the air. But upon closer questioning, it turned out that these people either had not mailed their letters, or had received answers, just not ones that satisfied them. Gai wrote down their names anyway. “Let *them* prove they answered your letters,” he remarked.

One woman who had been glaring at me for more than an hour suddenly asked who I was. At first neither she nor anyone else believed my answer.

But one person recognized me and convinced the others that it was so, at which point the woman apologized. "I thought you were 'from there,'" she said, referring to the KGB. "I'm sorry if I offended you, but you see we hear that 'over there' they know everything about us."

As the meeting wore on the discussion touched on everything from Soviet power — "it died with Lenin" — to the April 1989 events in Tblisi — "a disgrace" (not an injustice) — where an unknown number of people, including women and children, were killed during a demonstration by soldiers wielding shovels. Someone asked where new letters ought to be sent: to local deputies, to the central press, to the Central Committee? Aside from the writing of angry letters, the group did not appear to have a function.

According to one man at the meeting who appointed himself spokesperson but refused to give his name, the movement had no formal membership. "Whoever shows up, shows up," he said. "I am not a leader. Our leaders have not been coming to the meetings for over a month already. There are seven of them in the council. At first we fought for ecology; now we're combatting alcoholism." When he began to fudge an answer to my question about the larger goals of the movement, one of the women interrupted, "Yes, why do we exist? Maybe we should close down." A man made a proposal to "assemble the council and settle once and for all why we exist," but someone else objected that "our leadership doesn't need us, that's why they don't come." On that note, the meeting petered out.

In the fourth issue of *Breathing*, an independent typewritten literary monthly, an anonymous writer published a well-informed expose of Counter Movement. The author pointed out that the group's leaders, Timofeev and Sidorov, "begged the city authorities to register their group while conducting essentially no organizational work among the populace in order to achieve public recognition, which is higher than any official acknowledgment." Not surprisingly, the writer concluded, "they are used like a puppet by the apparat."

Indeed, the registration of Counter Movement in Magnitogorsk was cited again and again the city party committee as proof that "reform" is proceeding nicely. Never mind that registration was

granted only after the *obkom*, recipient of a barrage of letters mailed by leaders of Counter Movement to the Central Committee, sought to show its own reform bona fides and reprimanded the Magnitogorsk city committee for its "antiquated attitude toward dialogue with the people." After some prodding, the Magnitogorsk apparat reevaluated the emergence of Counter Movement, discovering just how valuable the existence of an informal political group could be.

In "A Window of *Glasnost*," the typescript publication of Counter Movement, it is possible to get a clearer idea of the views of the group's leadership. For example, Vladimir Sidorov wrote an article complaining that the city newspaper refused to publish his response to Mozgovoi's article. "The newspaper people know full well," Sidorov wrote, "that the fate of *perestroika* depends on whom the workers go for: for the patriots or for the internationalists," a code word for Jews. Another article, "Zionism Without the Mask," was an openly anti-Semitic tirade. Several times the publication drew attention to the ties between Counter Movement and other "patriotic" organizations, such as Fatherland in Sverdlovsk and Motherland in Cheliabinsk.

Later issues contained articles by two members of the post-schism GIMN, Igor Zimin and Vadim Borodin. "The programs of GIMN and Counter Movement differ from each other rather strongly," Borodin wrote. "Nevertheless, the possibility for cooperation between the two groups is greater than with any other." He added that their common goal was "education" and that they had discussed the question of terror, both sides concluding that it was "harmful." By rejecting the use of violence and associating itself with the officially sanctioned Counter Movement, the new GIMN distanced itself from the publicly rebuked original GIMN and sought to ensure the new organization's continued existence.

the persistence of the old regime

Perestroika was conceived as a party-led "mobilization" of "society" in which the "masses" would become "active" and in so doing demonstrate their support "from below" for the party's reform program "from above." Society's participation in the

reforms was seen as integral to their success, but the relative proportion of input from above and below remained undetermined, as did the forms input from below would be allowed to take. The Soviet intelligentsia was appealed to as a distinct group and permitted to found discussion clubs, but workers — by far the most numerous of the three main urban groups formed under Stalin — were not singled out for a distinct role. But it was taken for granted that Communist functionaries would be in the forefront of the entire process.

Ironically, however, of all three social groups, the battalions of party functionaries were the least interested in reforms, if only because they had the most to lose. The attempt at reform of the Communist order threatened the privileges of individual apparatchiks, provoking their resistance and revealing that the Communist party, far from being a reliable instrument for carrying out a bold new policy, was one of the major obstacles. The Magnitogorsk party apparat, careful not to repudiate openly the central leadership's reform program, was nonetheless "riding out the storm," a state of affairs only too visible to the rest of society.

Betrayed by their own forces, Communist reformers in the center reluctantly turned to emerging anti-Communist political movements composed of disaffected intellectuals and artists to provide the momentum for change and then even to articulate the program of what kind of change was necessary. Indeed, since 1985, the national republics and largest cities of the Russian republic experienced the rise of groups constituting themselves as a "civil society" on the liberal model (organized entities able to form and act independently of the party-state). But as noted above, in Magnitogorsk, groups claiming to constitute a civil society did not emerge. Magnitogorsk's "informal" political movements are composed of marginal elements with ineffectual leaders and offered neither an alternative to stagnant apparat domination nor a stick by which to goad the apparat along the reform path. On the contrary, the existence of the informals has come in handy as the recalcitrant apparat maneuvers to demonstrate a proreform posture.

Until recently the party even maintained a monopoly on the evaluation of its own performance and on what people could read or view. The party

owned, ran, or supervised all newspapers, television and radio stations, lecture halls, movie houses, and billboards. But the major Magnitogorsk daily managed to win for itself a measure of independence from the *gorkom* ideologues and to bring about the formation of a real "public sphere" where reliable information is presented and informed discussion takes place. This remarkable accomplishment was achieved primarily because of the skillful leadership of one man, Valerii Kucher, the newspaper's editor whose principled commitment to freedom of the press has been refracted through his total support for Gorbachev's reforms. But Kucher's lead has not been followed by anyone else in the local party hierarchy, some of whom contemplate ways of removing him only to shrink from the prospect of doing so and risking being publicly identified as antireform. Sadly, Kucher is the reformed wing of the party in Magnitogorsk.

The apparat has few friends among the populace but only one substantial challenger, who is himself an apparatchik. Walking a delicate line, Kucher has singlehandedly carried the banner of reform for the party in Magnitogorsk and done more than anyone else in the city to bring about a mental revolution and moral regeneration with profound psychological consequences. Yet in the end he blunted the reformist edge of his own leadership. Bearing the weight of inordinate responsibility, Kucher crossed all lines but one, the line of Communist party rule, and this failure to take advantage of the opportunity to break the Communist lock on power, a decision dictated by both tactical considerations and conviction, ultimately restricted the progress of political democratization in Magnitogorsk and brought the city to an impasse.

With the workings of the party having been partially pried open to quasi-independent journalistic investigation, the party in Magnitogorsk has been forced to become somewhat accountable for its rule. But this has not meant the democratization of the party so much as the public acknowledgment of the party's alienation from the people whose interests it could no longer pretend to represent. To an extent unimaginable as late as 1988, by 1989 fear passed from the people to party members, above all to the apparatchiks, now suffering from very low morale and experiencing an unfamiliar feeling of being under siege. Members of the local party elite, how-

ever, their fingers to the wind, have shown themselves to be more adaptable to the difficult new circumstances than many would have predicted.

Even the remarkably active election campaign that energized Magnitogorsk's population in 1989 showed the weakness of society's mobilization there. Not simply the most effective but virtually the only organized force during the campaign proved to be the Communist apparat, which skillfully deflected what amounted to an assault on its complacent monopoly power concocted by Moscow. Its legitimacy battered, the party nonetheless survives institutionally, no less powerful than before.

Some of the party rank and file, including workers, have begun voting with their feet and bolting the party, and defections from the party ranks seem likely to continue, thereby compounding the effects of the drop-off in the number of new applicants. But Magnitogorsk still has a large number of Communists, and although the myth of unshakable party supremacy has been forever destroyed, no substantial challenge to the hegemony of the Communist party apparat in Magnitogorsk has arisen. To top it all off, the new emphasis on the rule of law, however sincere, is called into question by the continued existence of the KGB, a repressive apparatus whose activities remain beyond both public scrutiny and the purvey of the district procurator, by his own admission.

As a result, even as the authority of the top layers of the party, including the Central Committee and Politburo (although not the anonymous party bureaucracy), was subverted in June 1990 at the Twenty-eighth Party Congress, the power of local party organizations was on the rise. The Magnitogorsk apparat, which retains a strong presence in enterprises, turned out to be no less "activated" in the politicization brought on by the competitive elections than "democratic" forces. Reasserting command over substantial financial and organizational resources, the apparat became determined to take even greater advantage of its privileged position. In Magnitogorsk the "failure" of economic reform guarantees the persistence of the apparat's political power and influence.

Meanwhile, despite the coalescence of broad societal support for greater openness and account-

ability and for competitive, multicandidate elections, in Magnitogorsk effective organization by society to secure these achievements has not resulted after a summons from the central Communist authorities or even after the image of Communist invincibility began to crack. It remains an open question how the people would react to any attempts to curtail the newspaper's professional independence or to block the access to contests for local and national political office of anti-Communist candidates, who have, in any case, yet to materialize.

from the one pyramid, many

Magnitogorsk, no less than the rest of the country, is engaged in a bitter struggle with Moscow over the disposition of local resources. The example of Magnitogorsk verifies the trend not toward decentralization but toward a splintering of centralism, as regions reject Moscow's "colonialism" and seek to establish their own centralized control over everything in their territories.

If all Soviet towns are "company towns" in that they owe their continued existence (and often their origin) to the presence of factories, all major enterprises located on a city's territory are not subordinated to the city, or even to the provincial authorities, but to central ministries. To a ministry, enterprises in a given locality are suppliers of components to other plants in the national network, rather than suppliers of finished output to local markets. To a city soviet, a ministry is a rich but miserly "uncle."

In comparison to most other industrial cities in the Soviet Union, Magnitogorsk is fortunate in at least one respect. In cities with several medium-and large-sized enterprises of varying profiles, up to a dozen ministries may be exercising autocratic powers over "their chunk" of the town with no coordination. By contrast, because of the sheer size of the steel plant and the resources associated with it, Magnitogorsk has to contend chiefly with one ministry: ferrous metallurgy. But this does not mean the city feels any less dependent upon central authorities.

Technically responsible for the construction and maintenance of health care facilities, schools, and communal services, the Magnitogorsk city soviet is compelled to rely on the steel plant — in other words, the Ministry — to attend to the urban infrastructure. For example, a bridge under construction across the Ural river connecting the city's two halves is part of the budget for the construction of the steel plant's new converter shop. The same is true of the "city" hotel being built. It is the factory, and thus the Ministry, not the city, which owns and operates the urban tram and bus systems.

Industrial budgets have historically carried negligibly sums for what are called "social needs." And even these small sums are invariably reduced, if not eliminated, as the industrial budget runs over. The new Magnitogorsk bridge, like the new hotel, was alternately included and scratched from the steel plant's construction budget for over twenty years before work finally began in 1989. Moreover, financial reforms in industry have brought even more problems for the city soviet. Previously the steel plant turned over 10 percent of the new apartments it built to the city soviet. Now, with the transition to full cost-accounting, the factory will no longer do so. At the same time, the city soviet remains without the means to construct its own apartments for the teachers, doctors, artists, and others on its growing housing list.

Of the 1 billion rubles profit generated by the Magnitogorsk Works in 1989, six percent — 60 million rubles — were returned for use by the city soviet. The outrage is growing. During a January 1989 conference in Magnitogorsk, "mayor" Mikhail Lysenko publicly took on a deputy minister in attendance. "We're building again like we did in the 1930s: the factory, the factory, the factory — without attention to social needs," he argued. "Mill 2000 will cost ten billion rubles [!], yet only 80 million have been allocated for social needs. Who needs a cold-rolled steel mill and a BOF converter with starving steel workers?"

"The director of the steel plant says that the Ministry siphons off all the money. And what does that mean for us!? We lose years dragging from office to office! It is impossible for us to work this way any longer! This is a criminal disgrace!

"The city's water situation has become catastrophic. . . . And these two huge industrial objects under construction will also need water in the future. On Saturdays and Sundays we turn off the water in twenty to thirty superblocks. There is no water in the city! Can it be that no one in the Ministry understands this! We demand: reduce by ten percent state orders for the Magnitogorsk Works and we'll use our metal to exchange for meat, sausage, and candy."

As a result of this long-dreamed-of and dramatic showdown with the Ministry on Magnitogorsk territory, Lysenko got a commitment of 2 million rubles to build an addition to the city's water pumping facilities. For Lysenko the confrontation was the culmination of several years of ostentatious shoe-pounding, and yet another confirmation of his guiding maxim that he who makes the most noise wrings the greatest "concessions" out of Uncle. As for the steel plant, the Ministry promised to allow it to keep all the profits from its above-plan production, but the plan targets were not reduced. In fact, they were raised.

All the noise could not conceal the fact that although the pressure for "decentralization" is building in Magnitogorsk, local officials have as yet no legal basis for such a move. And the views of the steel plant's director, Ivan Romazan, who though locally born and raised embraced the designation as the ministry's man in Magnitogorsk, seems to preclude unsanctioned local action to force the center's hand. Until large-scale reform of economic administration is introduced by Moscow, the strenuous efforts of those in Magnitogorsk can lead to no more than periodic concessions from the Ministry.

Moreover, even gaining autonomy from the center, rather than periodic concessions, would do little to affect the preposterous imbalance in the relations between the steel plant and the city soviet. Decentralization may in theory offer the possibility that localities could attend to their own needs, but in Magnitogorsk the Ministry's authoritarian role could simply fall to the steel plant, and there seems no reason to assume that enterprises like the Magnitogorsk Works, really a miniministry unto itself, will be any more "people-oriented" than the Moscow Ministry has been. Not until some effective form of "municipalization" occurs will the city

soviet be in a position to take advantage of any loosening in the Ministry's grip — should that come to pass. But a shift in the relations of power *within* any given region, however welcome, is no substitute for the fact that only a new economic system can begin to provide a solution to the country's problems.

present and future generations

Magnitogorsk is located in Cheliabinsk province, which forms part of one of the major industrial heartlands of the USSR. Factories in Cheliabinsk province produce 30 million tons of steel, not to mention 70 percent of the country's pipes and 50 percent of its tractors. It is the most militarized region in the country with over 500 major factories devoted to defense. Put another way, Cheliabinsk province produces nearly 4 billion rubles' worth of profit annually, one of the highest values by a single province in the Russian Republic. Only a tiny percentage of that output consists of consumer goods — a regrettable aspect, to be sure, of the country's heavy-industrial economy, but one that is eclipsed by the problem of environmental degradation.

Every year the smokestacks of the Magnitogorsk Works emit over 870 million tons of atmospheric exhaust, or some 40,000 pounds per inhabitant. Only half of that total passes through cleansing devices, which remove just a third of the dangerous gases. Fully one-fifth of the existing devices are out of service at any one time. Moreover, at night pollution control devices at the factory are routinely disengaged to circumvent their adverse effect on productivity.

Around Magnitogorsk the incidence of harmful substances in the air (coke dust, phenol, sulphurous anhydride) significantly exceeds allowable scientific norms, even 30 kilometers away. Soil samples taken from within 20 kilometers of the steel plant revealed zinc, copper, chrome and especially lead concentrations five and ten times the "natural" rate. Extraordinary concentrations of these same metals can be found in plants and vegetables grown outside the city limits. There is growing alarm at the possibility that even underground sources of water may be seriously contaminated. "The Ministry takes out everything that can be carried, leaving

behind only the poisons," a lecturer from the Magnitogorsk museum bitterly remarked in an interview. "And these poisonous emissions are mutilating not just the present generation but future ones."

The number of men retiring as invalids is increasing sharply. Upon retirement (normally at age 60) the average Magnitogorsk male is said to live three more years. Thirty-four percent of the entire adult population (those aged 15 or older) suffer from respiratory diseases. Almost 10 percent of all adults have a nervous condition. Rates for all manner of disease among adults in Magnitogorsk exceeds by over 20 percent even the relatively high average for the largest 100 industrial cities in the USSR. Of those diseases diagnosed, the vast majority are discovered in their later stages of development.

For Magnitogorsk children the rate for various diseases is 50 percent higher than that for the largest 100 industrial cities in the country. Sixty-seven percent of all children aged 14 and under suffer respiratory ailments. A majority of children suffer from bronchial infections. Bronchial asthma, pharyngitis, and ulcers among children are growing at a phenomenal rate. Forty-one of every one-hundred Magnitogorsk babies are born with pathologies.

Even were the steel plant to reduce production significantly, or to close altogether, future generations would continue to feel the lingering toxic effects. And at present, Magnitogorsk is utterly incapable of attending to the enormous health debacle it has created and perpetuates.

A walk through the city's largest hospital revealed that in many wards, cots filled every room and even lined the narrow hallways, virtually blocking all traffic; the place resembled a refugee center. The most advanced equipment, primarily of East German make, dates from the late 1970s but would be unrecognizable to anyone who had been a patient in a Western hospital since well before then. On the door of the only bath in the especially crowded cancer ward hung the sign "Closed. Potential Danger."

That the hospital must do without any computers for the foreseeable future is lamented yet somehow accepted. But lately the hospital has more and more been without even elementary medicines. And

other problems stemming from decades of miniscule investment in health care abound. A scheduled operation that was to be made accessible for my observation had to be canceled. There was no water. Most physicians, whose training and skills are often superb, accept their lot stoically. One volunteered the comment that her work was "no different from that in any wartime hospital."

N. E. Kulikov, chief of the city's health department, was blunt: "Only a misfortune could force a person to check in and remain in hospitals such as ours." Kulikov added that instead of the 2,190 doctors specified by official norms the city had 1,205, including 68 of 109 surgeons, 99 of 137 gynecologists, and 171 of 364 pediatricians. And the shortfall is growing. In 1988, 38 doctors left Magnitogorsk, primarily for lack of housing. One-quarter of the city's approximately 130,000 households are on various lists awaiting housing, and the average wait, some fifteen years,

has been lengthening. Living for decades in cramped quarters is one thing; seeing mildly ill children become severely ill or die for lack of antibiotics is another.

an uncertain prospect

The series of regressive measures emanating from Moscow since the late fall of 1990, whatever their final pattern, carry little prospect for the resolution of Magnitogorsk's myriad problems. And these problems — obsolete industry, dilapidated or non-existent infrastructure, declining living standards, and ecological devastation and deteriorating health — beset more than one thousand similar cities with almost one hundred million combined inhabitants. For Russia no less than the Georgia or the Baltics, superseding Communist party rule would be only a first step, a step that has yet to be taken in countless cities, including Magnitogorsk, notwithstanding the creation there of a public sphere and a limited expansion of the political arena.

Nor is it clear that the informal political movements offer a way out of the bind. While advancing their claim of independence from the state, most "informals" — even those that are consciously oppositional — have fought a tooth-in-nail struggle to achieve *official* recognition by local organs of state

power (soviets), have entered into agreements with state enterprises and soviets for the use of meeting places and other facilities, and have drawn into their membership people from official circles who rarely forego their official status even as they participate in activities as "informals." A great many of the "informals" seem untroubled by the paradox that they do not legally exist until they are formally registered by the authorities. Moreover, while almost all the politically oriented "informals" put forth as their goal gaining power inside the existing system in order somehow to alter that system, more often than not they advocate changes that do not appear guided by or consistent with the vision of a self-governing civil society. The rush to embrace a vision of the formation in the Soviet Union of a "civil society" seems unwarranted, especially in light of the dogged persistence of the power of the Communist party in the localities.

Despite having been irrevocably discredited before the public, reactionaries have been able to induce a paralysis of "dual power" in cities where the Communists have lost control over soviets to anti-Communists, and to exercise *de facto* veto power over national policy in those cities without anti-Communist administrations by means of their enduring dominion over the command economy. Here antidemocratic forces have given a preview of what the country can expect from any large-scale privatization effort: the old economic and political elites remain by far the best-positioned to influence the process and extract a bonanza. But short of physically eliminating this large and powerful section of the population, there appeared no way to "dislodge" them other than handing over the country's wealth through some sort of privatization and forcing them to become business-oriented. Such a move, which does not appear imminent, is replete with momentous moral ramifications. The huge body of workers may yet have a say in this and other pivotal questions, although it is impossible to predict what that might be.

Meanwhile, the basic structures of the old order live on. The Magnitogorsk Works, which along with thousands of other gigantic industrial enterprises formed the political and social backbone of the Stalinist order, continues to serve as the source of power for the tenacious remnants of that order. True, there is now underway a struggle between the

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Ultimately, whatever happens in the contests for power in the capital and between the republics, the

dilemmas posed by industrial cities with large working-class populations will remain, forming both the backdrop for central political struggles and a daunting stumbling block for all who would dare to lead the country out of crisis. During the five years of *perestroika* much has changed, and despite short-term setbacks, many of these changes are irreversible — especially the mental revolution brought about by *glasnost*. True, faithfully reading the new professional press has meant having one's entire world view and self-identity turned upside down. But *glasnost* has also introduced a detailed and flattering picture of a very different economic and political order that seems to offer the promise of prosperity and freedom. This image of "the miraculous West," with its many and profound inaccuracies, is now firmly implanted in the minds of the Soviet population and, given the Communist calamity at home, seems likely to endure, providing a built-in critique of anything resembling the old system.

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